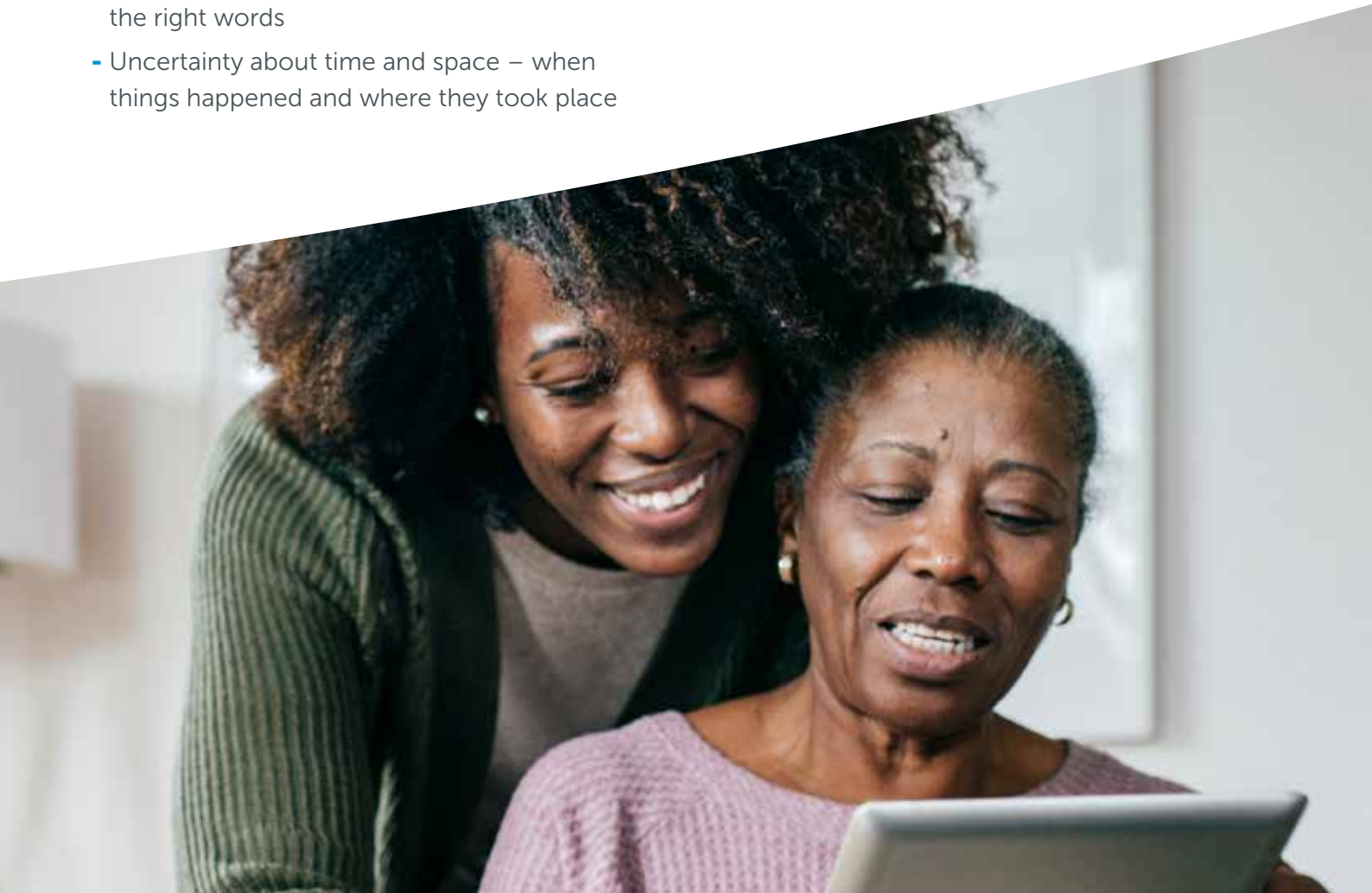


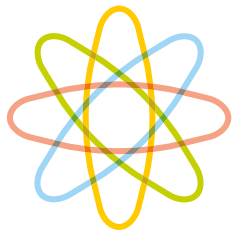
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Some early signs of dementia

- **Dementia is not a natural part of ageing**
- **It is not hereditary and isn't contagious**
– you can't catch it from anyone else
- **Don't ignore what is happening and put the signs down to 'old age' tell your doctor**
- **Are these familiar things, listed below, happening more frequently?**
- Memory loss affecting day-to-day abilities that you, your family and friends are noticing
- Getting lost easily in places that you would normally know
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks – such as dressing, making a cup of tea
- Problems with language – not always finding the right words
- Uncertainty about time and space – when things happened and where they took place
- Impaired/reduced judgment – for example, not understanding that you mustn't wear shorts and a vest in very cold weather
- Problems with trying to make sense of sentences or follow a film/programme
- Misplacing things – maybe your keys, glasses, purse or wallet - are you putting them in the fridge or oven for example
- Changes in mood and behaviour
- Changes in personality
- Loss of interest in things that you normally enjoy or love to do





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Dementia prevention

Diet/nutrition

Research suggests that adopting a “brain-healthy” diet can reduce the risk of developing dementia. Focus on a diet which is low in cholesterol, saturated fat, sugar, and salt, and high in dietary fibres, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, other complex carbohydrates, potassium, calcium, and magnesium.

Exercise

When it comes to brain health, starting and maintaining a regular exercise program is often the most difficult lifestyle change to implement. But physical activity doesn't have to be overly strenuous or involve a huge time commitment to generate benefits. The most important thing is that it is done on a regular basis (e.g. 30 minutes a day can be sufficient for a preventive effect). Walking is a good example of something that we may do everyday without going out of our way to do it. If you cannot manage this you may try arm and/or foot exercises whilst sitting in a chair. Exercise is beneficial because it increases the blood flow to the brain and reduces the risk of cardiovascular conditions that are associated with vascular dementia. Regular physical exercise also helps maintain the hormonal balance and stimulates the release of chemicals required for brain cell survival. Thus, it can delay the onset of dementia.

Mental activity

Mental exercise has been associated with a reduced risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Keeping the brain active increases and strengthens connections between brain cells and builds up “cognitive reserve”. Brain cells may die as we age, but research shows that mental and social activities promote new connections between cells.

To stay mentally active, it is important to commit to the idea of lifelong learning. The key is to add novelty to your experiences by learning and doing new things (rather than just repeating old activities). Variety and newness keep the mind sharp and promote a healthy brain.

Social engagement

Elements such as active involvement with family and a wide network of friends are likely to lower your risk of dementia. Research suggests that social activities which combine physical and mental activity are most effective in preventing dementia. For instance, walking with a friend while talking about a topic that requires problem solving is better than just walking, just visiting a friend, or just problem solving. Good ways to stay socially active include being involved in work or volunteer activities, joining clubs, and/or participating in organised travels.

If someone you know is becoming increasingly forgetful, encourage them to see a GP to talk about the possible early signs of dementia.

diversesecymru.org.uk